*173 we have just noted, would have formed an unbreakable bloc
614 if both elements had not been affected by the ferment of dissociation referred to in the course of this study.

[487] The to-da derived the larger portion of its prosperity from the Niger. Communication and transport could most easily be maintained along this artery, and it was the need to make the greatest possible use of the river that brought about the organization of the Somono.

[101] Etymologically, the word Somono simply means "fisherman." Like any trade practiced exclusively, professional fishing involves a certain loss of standing, and that is why the [564] Somono are said to be people of caste. This status is especially due to the supremacy of the clan over the Somono, without whom it could not have exploited the river.

64 After using force to annex them, Mamari added to their
564 number by assigning some of the furu-ba dyon' to the group, so
*173 that the Somono were soon closely dependent on the furu-ba. At the orders of the fama and his agents, they were required to [505] maintain ferry service across the river, to provide river transport in both directions, and to pay a fee in kind on their catch, with the understanding that they could continue to live according to the traditional Somono customs.

In return, the Somono were under the protection of the clan and their leaders benefitted from the generosity of the fama. They would occasionally be given a share of booty. [324]

Little by little, the few original Somono families were lost in the flood of newcomers. These included: the furu-ba dyon' who had become Somono on orders from the fama; people of diverse origins who had adopted Somono status of their own accord because they found it better than their own; and finally, the children of both, who were Somono by birth.

[233] It was likewise the exploitation of the property of the to-da that brought about a similar organization of the shepherds, or Peul. Let us first note that this term has no ethnic significance; it designates all who raise or watch over animals as a regular and professional occupation. Here, too, there is a kind of loss of standing, since a working shepherd could hardly do without a sponsor and must attach himself to a master. This is the case for

23/ 43 [35] However, the Bambara can assemble flocks by exchanging their grain for animals obtained from Peul, Moor, or Touareg shepherds. It is their way of investing their savings; thus, they never dispose of their animals during their periods of increase, but let them grow old in the herds, and their capital increases effortlessly, watched over by the head of the family.

233 184 In the Sahel, during the rainy season, the animals live by grazing on the numerous grasses and leguminous plants that grow on the mimosa-studded steppe. During the dry season, they live on the fallen branches and husks of the acacias. Then there is transhumance [231] to the inundated regions which become pastures as the waters recede. In the Nioro region, transhumance is towards the Kaarta, the Baoulé, and the Bakoy.

In the Sudan region the animals entrusted to the Peul make short journeys to change pastures; in the rainy season, to the plateaus which are immense pastures; from November on, they return to the valleys and streams.

In the Guinean area, the village flock is entrusted to a Peul shepherd who leads it off in the morning and brings it back at night. The animals are then tethered to the stakes in their owners' courtyards or are penned in an enclosure where the women go to milk them. After the harvest the flocks graze in the fields, but, from the beginning of February, they no longer stray from the dwellings, because everything is parched. The beasts are then fed millet, peanut stalks, or foliage.

231 Neither cattle nor sheep are in the least supervised in reproduction. Coupling is unrestricted and takes place at random in the pastures and at the whim of the animals throughout the year. Birth occurs no matter where; the herdsmen know nothing of obstetrical practice. The calves are nourished with a lightly salted mash of millet stalks or with the crushed fruit of a fig named aourou which supposedly has milk-producing properties.

[232] The finest male goats often are castrated to fatten or tame them. In Kaarta and Mandé goats are raised in pens constructed on piles one or two meters from the ground, with a flooring of boughs which allows excrement to fall through. In this way, the animals are protected from the humidity and from wild beasts.